

Deputy Blake Wright Honored With 12,504 Fellow Slain Officers

5-29-91

The widow of the late Wasatch County Deputy Blake Wright, who died fighting the wildfire west of Midway last August, added a red rose representing her husband to 143 other red roses in a temporary memorial to all the law enforcement officers in the U.S. who lost their lives in the line of duty during the past year.

Vanette Wright and her two oldest children, T. J. and Nick, joined the widows, families and friends of the other officers in a tribute to the slain officers in the third annual candlelight vigil in Washington D.C., May 12, sponsored by the National Fraternal Order of Police during National Police Week.

The names of all 12,504 federal, state and local law enforcement officers who have died in the line of duty since 1794 will be listed on a permanent, \$8.2 million National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial that will be dedicated next October.

Legislation authorizing the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, Inc., to establish the memorial on federal land in Washington D.C., was unanimously approved by Congress and signed into law by President Reagan on Oct. 19, 1984. President Bush attended the memorial's groundbreaking ceremony Oct. 30, 1989.

The memorial is being built on three acres of beautifully landscaped park land in Judiciary Square, and will feature an oval, tree-lined "pathway of remembrance". The site is surrounded by court buildings and is within walking distance of the U. S. Capitol, the Smithsonian Museums, and other points of historical interest in the nation's

capital. The names of the slain officers will be displayed in marble panels on polished granite walls along the "pathway", with new names added annually.

Mrs. Wright said a blue laser beam rises from the site and will be a permanent part of the memorial, as a tribute to America's "Thin Blue Line" of law enforcement officers.

The chairman of the memorial fund, Craig Floyd, said he and his staff spent two years searching through the country's 15,432 police agencies to collect the names for the memorial. They discovered the first officer to die in the line of duty was U.S. Marshall Robert Forsyth, who was killed in Augusta Ga., in 1794, while serving a warrant.

The panels will include the names of the four youngest officers to die, all aged 19, as well as the oldest, 81-year-old Dotson "Pop" Sutton of Polaski County, MO, who was struck by a car in 1952.

Floyd said the officers slain by famous criminals also will be memorialized, like the five that were killed by Billy the Kid in the 1870s and the eight gunned down by Bonnie and Clyde in the 1930s.

Mrs. Wright said helpful counseling and seminars were held for the families and co-workers of the officers for two days following the ceremony.

So far, more than 700,000 Americans have contributed over \$7 million to the memorial fund, but \$1.2 million is still needed to complete it. Tax-deductible contributions can be sent to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF), 1360 Bev-
erly Rd., McLean, VA 22101.

Sheriff's Office Losing Valuable Reserve Officer

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Wasatch County Sheriff's Reserve Deputy Martin Combs, who has filled a slot equal to one half of a deputy without any compensation, will be moving from the County and was honored by his fellow officers Tuesday evening.

Deputy Combs has been a full-time caretaker at the Camp Cloud Rim Girl Scout Camp, five miles north of Midway, for about five years. He lived at the camp and also kept an eye on the area for the Sheriff's Office, making it unnecessary for other deputies to have to include it in their patrols, said Sheriff Edd Thacker.

Deputy Combs is a Category 1 officer, the same as regular officers. He paid for his own training, attended all the required additional training classes, equipped his own vehicle with lights and a siren, used his own radio, and paid all his own expenses.

"Whenever there was an incident, or anything at all up there, he would handle it," Sheriff Thacker said. "A regular, on-duty deputy did not have to go up to take the in-

formation, handle the accident or arrest people. He usually arrested them and transported them down here for us...

"He was the same as a full deputy, only he wasn't paid. Sometimes, if I was short of manpower, he would come down and pull a regular working shift for us..."

"He was an excellent officer and we will miss him. Also, Wasatch County will miss him because of the number of hours he saved us in responding to that location and handling whatever happened."

The Sheriff's Department presented Officer Combs with a plaque that listed all their names, and a replica of his badge, in gratitude for his dedicated service for the County.

He has accepted a promotion to a job in Washington, D.C. with the Girl Scouts. Sheriff Thacker said Officer Combs is a dedicated officer, and that he would have given up the promotion and accepted a decrease in pay if Wasatch County had had enough money to offer him a job as a deputy, because he loves law enforcement work.